

MERCATOR.

OR,

Commerce Retrieved;

BEING

CONSIDERATIONS on the State of the British Trade, &c.

From Tuesday, September 15. to Thursday, September 17. 1713.

*The Reasons why the Treaty of Commerce is Opposed not the same, as are pretended.
The Value of the French Trade, as it Employs the English Shipping, concealed from the People.*

The true Concern we have in the Employ of our Shipping set forth.

Shipping Employs more People than Manufacturing, in proportion to the Value laid out.

HERE is good Ground to believe, that the People, who have been prevailed upon to Oppose the Treaty of Commerce with France, have done it upon a supposition of its being carried on always to the Disadvantage of this Kingdom; the People, who have Deluded them in this Matter, could do it upon no other Foundation; for albeit they have other Reasons themselves, and have Wicked Party-Reasons, which move them to Oppose it, be it Right or Wrong, and in which, it is to be feared, the Gain or Loss, the Advantage or Disadvantage of their Country has but little Share; yet when they come to propose the Thing to the People, they cannot offer it upon any other Foot, or with any other View, than that of their Country's Good.

To make this probable, they have hitherto amused the People with the Notion, in general, that the Trade to France exhausts the Nation, drains our Money, and the Value Imported is prodigiously, greater than the Value Exported.

Now there are great and good Reasons to believe, that what they say is false in Fact; yet if it were really so, the *MERCATOR* says they have artfully concealed from the People the great Article of our Shipping and Navigation; they are loth to tell them, how great a Number of our Shipping and Seamen are Employed by the Trade to France; all the Goods we send thither, or receive from thence, being carried in our own Bottoms; all the Freight Out being paid by the French, and the Freight Home, tho' paid by ourselves, is yet paid by the French Trade, and must be put to the Credit of that Trade, when we are speaking of it in its particular State, as it respects the rest of our Trade.

What the French Trade causes to be expended in England upon the Building, Fitting, and Employing Ships, and Employing Seamen, which Ships and Seamen are so publick an Advantage to the Nation; all that Advantage is procured by the French Trade, altho' part of it be paid by our selves to our selves.

For there is a manifest Difference between the Employing our Shipping and Seamen, and other of our Works or Manufactures, which may Employ the same Number of People; because the encrease of Shipping is an addition of Wealth, which, as it is peculiar in its Uses, so it can be raised no other way.

It is worth observing here, that the setting a Ship out to Sea, which may cost One thousand Pound, Employs more Families of Poor, than One thousand Pound can Employ in any particular Manufacture in the World. Sir Josiah Child, who all People allow to have been a good Judge of Trade, was wont to have this Expression, That a Ship was the best Woollen Manufacture in the Nation.

But if it be true, that a Thousand Pound laid out in a Ship Employs so many Hands in Building and Fitting out to Sea, how must we consider this Ship, when it is at Sea, and becomes a Habitation and a stated Employ for about 15 or 16 Families, as long as it remains a Ship? So that every Ship is a little Town added to the Commonwealth; which Town is Peopled by our Inhabitants; but those Inhabitants are Fed, Cloathed, and made Rich by other Nations.

Add to this, that every Voyage this Ship makes, she calls in the Aid and Assistance of all the Artificers, needful in fitting up Ships, to furnish and fit her Out for a new Voyage, and she pays them with the Money, she has earned in her Voyage from other Nations. This is like the Annual Fair of the Village, where Neighbouring Towns bring their Wares to Sell, and the People of the Village lay out their Money.

These Wooden Towns we Build and People, and then send them abroad Freight with Corn, Coal, Lead, Leather, Woollen Manufactures, &c. and they Sell them to the French; the French not only Buy those Goods, but pay the Criers for bringing them; which payment for the Carriage, we may affirm, Employs as many Families, goes as far to support the Publick Stock, and is as much Gain to the Kingdom of Great-Britain, as all the Woollen Manufactures they carry in them.

If the French Commerce has Employ'd Five Hundred Ships yearly in carrying and bringing, it has maintained Five Hundred British Towns, supported all their Inhabitants, and enabled those Towns to lay out great Sums of Money in their daily Recruit and Repair.

Let the Enemies of this Trade tell us, how they will find Employ for so many Ships and Seamen, as always were wont to Gain their Bread by the Trade to France, and for what Reason they never allowed the Employment of that Shipping any room, in their Account of the Profits of that Trade: They cannot but

but own, that all the French Trade has been carried on in British Ships: They cannot but acknowledge, that those Ships Employ an infinite Number of Seamen, Artificers, Labourers and Tradesmen, in Sailing, Repairing, Supplying and Managing them; a large extent of Land to produce the Provisions, which Victual and provide them for their Voyages. It is hard to conceive the Advantages to Families, to the Landed-Men, to Trade, to every Body, that our Shipping procures to the Nation.

But all this Shipping, all these Advantages, are nothing, if they are not Employ'd, if a Trade is not found out to Employ them; and every Trade, that does Employ them, is our Advantage to Cherish and Embrace: Nay, altho' there were no other Profit in that Trade.

Hence the Dutch Trade, altho' it is a Trade allowed to be carried on to our Advantage, is nevertheless much less so, than it would otherwise be, because it is chiefly carried on in the Dutch Ships, not in our own: If any Man doubts the Truth of that part, let the Custom-house Books determine it, and the Dutch Convoys, which have always, during the whole War, been Established in the River of Thames, the Humber, and the Firth of Edinburgh, be a proof of it: It is not probable, that the Dutch Men of War should be appointed always both to fetch and bring the Trade between England and Holland, if it had, all been carried on in English Bottoms.

As the Dutch Trade is less Advantageous to Britain than it could otherwise be, because it is not carried on in English Shipping; so the French Trade, on the contrary, is more Advantageous to us, than it would otherwise be, because it is all carried on in British Shipping.

What the Value of this Difference is, has been hinted at already, but shall be farther and more particularly Explained hereafter, when the Account of the Exports to France, for the present Year, can be made up: But, in the mean time, the *MERCATOR* believes, he may with good Reason say, it has always been sufficient to turn the Scale of the Trade to the Advantage of Britain in general, in spite of all the pretended Disparity between the Imports and Exports of the Two Kingdoms; and must conclude, that on this Account no Man can Oppose the Resettling a Commerce with France, without being an Enemy to his Country, and being instrumental, as far as he so acts, to the Lessening and Discouraging the Shipping and Navigation of this Kingdom.

To say in this Argument, that the Quantity of Goods we Import from France is too great for us, and over-balances our Export, is really to say nothing to the purpose; for, 1. That all our Imports will now be less than ever they were, the *MERCATOR* believes he has unanswerably proved: But 2. If they are not, you have it still in your power to make them less; for by the present Treaty you are at liberty to lay on such Duties, as may be equal to a Prohibition upon every kind of the French Goods if you please, so you do but lay the same Duties upon the like Goods of other Nations.

To say this affects the Portugal Trade, is yet more ridiculous; for you may do this on the Brandy, wrought Silks, French Linen, French Paper, French Pruens, &c. Things, which never came from Portugal, and which Portugal cannot supply us with at all.

If this be so, then nothing can interfere with Portugal but the French Wines; and sure no Man will say that the French Wines alone will over-ballance all our Exports to France, and amount to more than all our Woollen Manufacture, Leather, Corn, Lead, Allom, Tin, Coal, Sugars, Tobacco, and the like, which the French every Year demands from us.

It is impossible for them to answer this Argument; they dare not state it fairly to their People, how that by the Treaty of Commerce now in Debate, we are at Liberty to keep on, or lay on, what Duties we please, on all the French Goods, even till it amounts to a Prohibition; so that we may be sure, for the future, that their Imports shall not ballance our Exports, and at the same time the French King is obliged to take off all the high Duties laid in France upon our Goods since the Year 1664, as by the Treaty, and is tied up expressly from ever laying them on again, unless we break our part of the Articles with them.

Let the Opposers of the Treaty of Commerce then tell us, which way the Treaty is injurious to the British Trade, and how it can be possible, that the French can over-ballance us by their Imports, when this Treaty is made Effectual.

The Improbabilities of their Importing the usual quantities of Goods of any sort, which they formerly did, has been laid down and can admit of no Dispute; and the Certainty of our not being over-ballanc'd by them in Trade, is the Consequence of that probability: But if there should be any possibility of it afterward, if upon a Years Trade it should appear, that we were still Over-ballanc'd, Is it not in the power of the British Parliament to Lay any higher Duties on Wrought Silks, on Brandy, on Paper, even so as that none at all shall Come in? And will it be any Damage to us if none Comes in, either from France or any other Port? Are we not able to Weave all our Own Silks, Distill Our Own Spirits, and make Our Own Paper?

It would be something to the general Information of the People, if those, who have so warmly Opposed the Treaty of Commerce, would let the People see, what they have to say to these Things, and which way they can avoid the force of them.

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